



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## QUALITY ASSURANCE SPECIALIST FOR EARLY LEARNING

First Things First (Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board) is a public agency that exists to increase the quality of, and access to, the early childhood development and health system that ensures a child entering school comes healthy and ready to succeed. Passed by voter initiative in 2006, First Things First operates through a tax on tobacco products.

Governed by a state board and 31 Regional Partnership Councils, First Things First engages diverse constituencies across the state to accomplish its mission. Organizational values include a child and family centered focus that is coordinated and collaborative; a comprehensive systems approach with continuous inquiry, learning and reflection; respect and responsiveness to the diversity and cultures represented by partners and families; and, transparency and strong accountability toward achieving outcomes that will ensure all young children start kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. First Things First acts in accordance with our Beliefs, Actions and Performance statements, which are attached.

### **Position Summary**

The Quality Assurance Specialist represents First Things First and is responsible for effectively planning, conducting and reporting on program quality assurance reviews on grantees and contractors awarded First Things First funding to impact the development and health of children 5 years and younger. Funded strategies, programs and activities include high quality early care and education in a mixed service delivery system that includes early learning programs that are private, public, faith-based and tribal, pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, center and home-based programs, and family, friend and neighbor care; Quality First, Arizona's quality improvement and rating system; program standards, early learning standards, and appropriate curriculum and assessment; strategies that improve access and affordability to high quality programs, including scholarships and expansion; recruitment and professional development for the early care and education workforce; and, early screening, identification and inclusion of children with developmental delay and special health care needs. Quality assurance activities include: desk-based and on-site monitoring for program compliance, fidelity and quality related to Standards of Practice; collecting and synthesizing programmatic quantitative and qualitative data; making recommendations for appropriate changes and improvements; and working with the Early Learning team in development and regular monitoring of quality improvement and corrective action plans and providing technical assistance.

This position reports to the Senior Director for Children's Health and is a collaborative partner with the Program Specialist for Early Learning, the Quality First team, Quality Assurance Specialists in Children's Health and Family Support, as well as other cross-divisional teams related to monitoring and continuous improvement of First Things First strategies and programs. It requires the ability to communicate effectively, work as a contributing team

member, and share expertise and findings with colleagues. Matters of a sensitive nature with possible impact to the overall strategy, program, grantee or First Things First, as well as any issues involving confidentiality or matters that have potential political impact, must be brought to the attention of the Senior Director and the Chief Program Officer.

This position requires approximately 40% travel throughout the state.

### **Distinguishing Characteristics**

The ideal candidate enthusiastically supports the vision and mission of First Things First, and possesses the personal qualities of integrity, credibility and competency to be an exemplary representative of FTF. She/he is an early childhood and early learning systems thinker and has a proven track record of coordinating and collaborating with diverse individuals, organizations and agencies across Arizona. The candidate demonstrates obvious understanding of and comfort in working in a decentralized, transparent organization.

### **Primary Responsibilities**

- Collaborate cross-divisionally in initial and on-going development and implementation of a quality assurance system to review FTF grantees and contractors implementing early learning programs. Initial work includes developing review tools, rubrics and supporting information; planning, development, training and implementation of standardized policies, procedures and practices for scheduling, conducting and reporting results of reviews; and, initiating protocols for communicating quality assurance information and results with grantees and contractors, internal FTF staff, and FTF Board and Council members.
- Conduct quality assurance reviews on grantees and contractors receiving FTF funding for early learning programs. Use standardized tools and processes throughout in scheduling reviews, communicating with grantees and contractors, reviewing program quality elements, documenting observations and evidence, analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, and reporting review results and recommendations
- Seek and utilize information and data to inform continuous improvement of quality assurance tools and processes.
- Analyze data and results from state and regionally funded early learning programs to identify best practices, trends, issues and challenges in program implementation.
- Participate in quality assurance projects as assigned or approved by the Sr. Director.
- Collaborate in development of content specific information, training and publications which promote effective practice.
- Participate in the FTF Early Learning Strategy Implementation Team, and provide support to Regional Area Teams as requested. Develop and maintain cooperative working relationships with FTF staff, Regional Partnership Councils, and the Board, as well as partners and community stakeholders.
- Ensure that information, results and recommendations from quality assurance reviews are documented and communicated effectively as requested. Respond to requests for information and/or assistance promptly, professionally, courteously and helpfully.
- Provide high-quality services in a manner consistent with the principles of the FTF organizational culture.
- Employ regular cross-divisional communication within the Program Division and with all FTF Divisions.

- Make recommendations to and keep the Sr. Director for Early Learning informed on the operations, issues and needs of the Quality Assurance team.
- Identify areas for self-improvement in order to perform assigned projects and carry out responsibilities to meet desired outcomes; actively pursues appropriate means and methods to increase effectiveness in those areas.

### **Qualifications**

- A bachelor's or master's degree preferred from an accredited college or university in early childhood education or special education, early childhood development, business, systems management, or related field
- Knowledge and minimum 3 years' experience in quality assurance, monitoring or review systems and knowledge of effective and efficient quality assurance tools, processes and protocols
- Knowledge and minimum of 5 years' experience in child development and early learning issues and services for children birth to five
- Demonstrates strong problem solving and analytical skills  
Projects a professional, resourceful image and represents FTF in diverse settings and situations
- Competency in synthesis and analysis of information and data
- Proficiency in Microsoft Word software and intranet and internet communication tools and methods
- Effectively serve as a consultant to FTF staff teams, Council and Board members and external partners on quality assurance information and results related to FTF goals
- Recognize and apply fundamental regulations and compliance requirements in the implementation of the quality assurance system
- Communicate clearly and concisely both orally and in writing to effectively articulate program goals with sensitivity to ethnic, cultural and local community differences
- Deal effectively with individuals at all business levels and a variety of situations requiring tact, judgment and composure
- Ability to promote and achieve a broad diversity of thought, background, ethnicity and perspective in providing assistance and resources
- Ability to ensure public transparency and accountability, as well as measure and improve outcomes appropriate for organizational goals.
- Agility and capability to work within a fast-moving environment, while also driving toward clarity and solutions; demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities.

This position is not covered by the State Personnel Merit System, but the State of Arizona provides a comprehensive benefits package, including a top-rank retirement plan, low cost health and dental coverage, supplemental policies such as vision and short -term disability, and generous leave programs. Salary range for this position is \$50,000 – \$60,000. Review of resumes will begin on March 23, 2012 and continue until the position is filled. For consideration please submit a cover letter, comprehensive resume and three professional references to:

[www.azstatejobs.gov](http://www.azstatejobs.gov)